

Old Ship Church
Hingham, Massachusetts

DRAWER

4A

CHURCHES

71.2009.085 03241

Abraham Lincoln and Religion

Old Ship Church
Hingham, Massachusetts

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

CONGREGATIONAL LIBRARY

Second Floor

14 Beacon Street

Boston, Massachusetts

May 13, 1927.

Mr. Frank J. Heintz,
Farmers State Bank,
Jacksonville, Ill.

Dear Mr. Heintz:-

The "Old Ship" Meeting House of Hingham, Mass., built in 1681, is still in use as a house of worship and has been continuously since its erection.

The society owning this building always has been congregational, as were all the churches founded by the settlers of Massachusetts. This particular church, however, about 100 years ago, joined the Unitarian Congregational Denomination, and is so affiliated to-day.

Of course Samuel Lincoln and his children were "Congregationalists". That is, that was the only form of church government they knew anything about. But it would be incorrect to say that they had any connection with the modern Congregational denomination, for that was not organized till the 19th century. But the Puritan churches of New England had the congregational principle as opposed to the presbyterial principle of the Presbyterian and Reformed churches of the Middle States. In that sense and in that sense only can the Massachusetts Puritans be called "Congregationalists". They were Calvinistic members of the Church of England who changed their polity from Episcopacy under the influence of the Plymouth colonists, who had reached Massachusetts ten years before them.

I am glad to try to answer your questions and hope I have succeeded

Sincerely yours,

Fred'k T. Persons.

ORDER OF SERVICES

DEDICATION

OF THE

Restored Meeting House

OF THE FIRST PARISH

HINGHAM

MASSACHUSETTS

OCTOBER 5, 12 *and* 19

1930

Sunday Morning, October 5, at 10.50

First Regular Service

ORGAN PRELUDE, *Marche Religieuse*

Guilmant

ESCORT OF THE COLORS

DOXOLOGY

RESPONSIVE SERVICE I

Rev. LOUIS CRAIG CORNISH, D.D.

GLORIA

FIRST LESSON

Rev. JOHN WILLIAM DAY, D.D.

ANTHEM, *The Eternal God is our Refuge*

West

SECOND LESSON

Rev. JOHN WILLIAM DAY, D.D.

CHORAL RESPONSE (Minister and Choir)

PRAYER, AND LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. HOUGHTON PAGE

CHORAL RESPONSE

OFFERTORY, *Offertoire, Opus 14*

Dunham

ANTHEM, *Spirit of Mercy, Truth and Love*

Selby

PLACING OF MEMORIAL WREATH

Master EBENEZER GAY WHITING

PRESENTATION

Mr. EBEN HOWARD GAY

HINGHAM HYMN (Tune "Dundee")

We praise the Lord, who o'er the sea
Our exiled fathers led,
And on them in the wilderness
His light and glory shed.
In want and fear for many a year
They spread their scanty board;
Yet loud and strong their grateful song
The Giver's hand adored.

Two hundred years have passed away;
The desert frowns no more;
And glory, such as Judah knew,
Crowns hillside, vale, and shore.
Then louder still, o'er plain and hill,
Send forth the shout of praise,
And bid it run from sire to son,
Through all succeeding days.

HENRY WARE, JR.

Composed for Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Town

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN (Tune "St. Martin's")

Give ear, ye children, to my law
Devout attention lend,
Let the instructions of my mouth
Deep in your hearts descend.

My tongue, by inspiration taught,
Shall parables unfold:
Dark oracles, but understood,
And owned for truths of old,

Which we from sacred registers
Of ancient times have known,
And our forefathers' pious care
To us has handed down.

Let children hear the mighty deeds,
Which God performed of old,
Which in our younger years we saw,
And which our fathers told.

Our lips shall tell them to our sons,
And they again to theirs,—
That generations yet unknown,
May teach them to their heirs.

NAHUM TATE, NICHOLAS BRADY, and ISAAC WATTS (*Arr.*)

BENEDICTION

Rev. EDWARD AUGUSTUS HORTON, D.D.

CHORAL AMEN

ORGAN POSTLUDE, Toccata, Suite in G Minor

Rogers

Sunday Afternoon, October 5, at 3

Communion Service

Conducted by the Reverend LOUIS CRAIG CORNISH, D.D. Assisted by the Reverends HOUGHTON PAGE and J. HARRY HOOPER

On this occasion there will be set out in the Meeting House the following pieces of Ancient Church Plate:

The Baptismal Bowl, pewter, silvered, which Tiffany experts, by the makers' marks upon it, claim antedates 1590. The late Francis H. Lincoln believed that this decision substantiated beyond question our tradition that the Bowl was used in Old Hingham, before the Migration, and was brought over to New Hingham by Peter Hobart and the first settlers. It has been in continuous and reverent use in Old and New Hingham for three and a half centuries. Some Hingham families have been christened from it consecutively for from ten to fifteen generations. Undoubtedly, it is the oldest baptismal basin or font to be owned and used by any one Parish in this country.

Two Pewter Communion Plates, silvered, bearing the letters H C (Hingham Church), dating probably from about 1625.

Four Pewter Communion Tankards, of about 1625. Two are silvered. It is believed that these six pieces were brought over, probably from Old Hingham, by the forefathers.

The following Communion Cups:

The oldest was given by Preserved Hall, the village cooper, who died in 1740, bequeathing £30 to the Church of the First Parish in Hingham "to be laid out in Plate for the Lord's Table." It bears the inscription "The Gift of Mr. Preserved Hall to ye First Church of Christ in Hingham."

Two Cups inscribed "The Gift of M^{rs} Hannah Thaxter (Relict of the Hon^{ble} Sam^l Thaxter)" 1756.

Two Cups inscribed "The Gift of M^{rs} Elizabeth Beal (Relict of M^r Daniel Beal)" 1769.

Two Cups inscribed "Bequeathed by the Widow Ruth Leavitt" 1794.

Six Cups inscribed "Presented by M^{rs} Sarah Derby once the consort of D^r Ezekiel Hearsey" 1790.

The Cushing Bible to be used at this service, belonging to Mr. John T. Hollis, bears the date of 1599, and contains the continuous family records complete, beginning in Old Hingham prior to the Migration and continuing in New Hingham from 1635 to the present day.

Sunday Afternoon, October 12, at 4
Fellowship Service

ORGAN PRELUDE, Suite in D: 1. *Prelude*; 2. *Invocation*; 3. *Finale*

Debat-Pousan

PROCESSIONAL HYMN (Tune "Duke Street")

Unto thy temple, Lord, we come
With thankful hearts to worship thee;
And pray that this may be our home
Until we touch eternity:—

The common home of rich and poor,
Of bond and free, and great and small;
Large as thy love for evermore,
And warm and bright and good to all.

And dwell thou with us in this place,
Thou and thy Christ, to guide and bless!
Here make the wellsprings of thy grace
Like fountains in the wilderness.

May thy whole truth be spoken here;
Thy gospel light forever shine;
Thy perfect love cast out all fear,
And human life become divine.

ROBERT COLLYER

INVOCATION, FOLLOWED BY THE LORD'S PRAYER Rev. J. HARRY HOOPER

ANTHEM, Look upon the Rainbow (A Song of Praise)

Whelpley

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Rev. J. HARRY HOOPER

CHORAL RESPONSE (Minister and Choir)

PRAYER: Rev. ALFRED R. HUSSEY, First Parish, Plymouth (Founded at Scrooby, England, 1606)

CHORAL RESPONSE

BASS SOLO, Behold what manner of Love

MacDermid

ADDRESS: For the Congregationalists, Rev. VAUGHAN DABNEY, D.D., Second Church,
Dorchester; President Massachusetts Federation of Churches

ADDRESS: For the Universalists, JOHN A. COUSENS, LL.D., President Tufts College

ADDRESS: For the Society of Friends, Mr. HENRY H. PERRY of Dover

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN (Tune "St. Anne")

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

ISAAC WATTS

ADDRESS: For the Unitarians, Rev. LOUIS CRAIG CORNISH, D.D., President of the American
Unitarian Association and Tenth Minister of First Parish

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN (Tune "Winchester New")

Eternal One, thou living God,
Whom changing years unchanged reveal,
With thee their way our fathers trod;
The hand they held, in ours we feel.

The same our trust, the same our need,
In sorrow's stress, in duty's hour;
We keep their faith, if not their creed,
That faith the fount of all our power.

We bless thee for the growing light,
The advancing thought, the widening view,
The larger freedom, clearer sight,
Which from the old unfolds the new.

With wider view, come loftier goal;
With fuller light, more good to see;
With freedom, truer self-control,
With knowledge, deeper reverence be.

Anew we pledge ourselves to thee,
To follow where thy truth shall lead;
Afloat upon its boundless sea,
Who sails with God is safe indeed!

SAMUEL LONGFELLOW

BENEDICTION

Rev. J. HARRY HOOPER

CHORAL AMEN

ORGAN POSTLUDE, March for a Church Festival

Best

Sunday Afternoon, October 19, at 4 Historical and Civic Service

ORGAN PRELUDE, Marche Pontificale

Lemmens

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN (Tune "Materna")

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

O beautiful for pilgrim feet,
Whose stern, impassioned stress,
A thoroughfare for freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law!

O beautiful for glorious tale
Of liberating strife,
When valiantly for man's avail,
Men lavished precious life!
America! America!
May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness,
And every gain divine!

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

KATHARINE LEE BATES

SERVICE OF COMMEMORATION [Congregation standing. To be read responsively by leader and people.]

We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, but them thou didst plant.

For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them.

But thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou wast favorable unto them.

Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:

Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.

We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.

For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make known to their children:

That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children:

That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

He gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.

And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord.

GLORIA

ANTHEM, Lovely Appear (from "Redemption")

Gounod

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Rev. J. HARRY HOOPER

CHORAL RESPONSE (Minister and Choir)

PRAYER: Rev. ADELBERT L. HUDSON, First Parish in Dorchester (Gathered 1630)

CHORAL RESPONSE

ANTHEM, The Breaking Waves Dashed High *Mrs. Hemans* ("Music by her sister")
(Brought over from England by the Rev. BROOKE HERFORD in 1875)

ADDRESS: Rev. CHARLES E. PARK, D.D., First Church in Boston (Gathered 1630)

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN (Tune "Hamburg")

O sometimes gleams upon our sight
Through present wrong the eternal right;
And step by step, since time began,
We see the steady gain of man,—

That all of good the past hath had
Remains to make our own time glad,
Our common, daily life divine,
And every land a Palestine.

Through the harsh noises of our day
A low, sweet prelude finds its way;
Through clouds of doubt and creeds of fear
A light is breaking calm and clear.

Henceforth my heart shall sigh no more
For olden time and holier shore:
God's love and blessing, then and there,
Are now and here and everywhere.

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

ADDRESS: His Excellency FRANK G. ALLEN, Governor of Massachusetts

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN (Tune "America")

My country, 'tis of thee,—
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing:
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From every mountain side
Let freedom ring!

My native country, thee,—
Land of the noble free,—
Thy name I love:
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills;
My heart with rapture thrills
Like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees
Sweet freedom's song!
Let mortal tongues awake;
Let all that breathe partake;
Let rocks their silence break,
The sound prolong!

Our fathers' God, to thee,
Author of liberty,—
To thee we sing:
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light;
Protect us by thy might,
Great God, our King.

SAMUEL FRANCIS SMITH

BENEDICTION

Rev. J. HARRY HOOPER

CHORAL AMEN

ORGAN POSTLUDE, Allegro Vivace (Sonata No. 1)

Mendelssohn



Present Meeting House built in 1681. Sometimes known as the "Old Ship," it is probably the best preserved example of the Puritan Meeting House in America. It is likewise the oldest building in America continuously used for purposes of public worship.

Additions in 1731 and 1755.

Ceiling put in place in 1731. Removed in 1930.

Present pulpit and first pews erected in 1755.

Original pews removed in 1869.

Meeting House restored in 1930, through the generosity of Mr. EBEN HOWARD GAY.

Ministers of First Parish

Reverend PETER HOBART	1635-1678-9
Reverend JOHN NORTON	1678-1716
Reverend EBENEZER GAY, D.D.	1718-1787
Reverend HENRY WARE, D.D.	1787-1805
Reverend JOSEPH RICHARDSON	1806-1871
Reverend CALVIN LINCOLN	1855-1881
Reverend EDWARD AUGUSTUS HORTON, D.D.	1877-1880
Reverend HIRAM PRICE COLLYER	1882-1888
Reverend JOHN WILLIAM DAY, D.D.	1890-1899
Reverend LOUIS CRAIG CORNISH, D.D.	1900-1915
Reverend HOUGHTON PAGE	1916-1926
Reverend J. HARRY HOOPER	1926-

Teacher

Reverend ROBERT PECK	1638-1641
----------------------	-----------

Choir

Mrs. HELEN BREWER WALKER, *Soprano*

Mrs. ALAN F. HERSEY, *Contralto*

Mr. HERBERT KEARNS, *Tenor*

Mr. JAMES S. WHYTE, *Bass*

Mr. GEORGE P. WILLIAMSON, *Organist*

Miss GERTRUDE EDMUNDS, *Choir Director*

FIRST PARISH
IN HINGHAM
UNITARIAN



CHURCH GATHERED
1635

MEETING HOUSE BUILT
1681

Where did the original meeting house stand?

On a low hill in front of where Derby Academy now stands, a short distance north of the present meeting house.

When was the present meeting house built?

1681.

Was part of the original meeting house used in the present one?

It is so claimed, but nothing in the records prove it. The records say it cost 430⁰/₆ and the old house.

What was the original size of the present meeting house?

The same length as now from north to south, and in width the space between the present galleries. 55 ft. long by 45 ft. wide.

When were the additions put on?

One on the cemetery side in 1731. One on the street side in 1755. Each 14 ft.

When were the original pews changed?

1869.

Are these restored pews the same as the original?

The same design and substantially the same plan. Thirty of the old doors and sides were used.

Originally, what were the pews directly in front of the pulpit used for?

Pew directly in front of pulpit was called the elders' pew. Pew in front of that (not restored) the deacons'.

What were the original seats?

Oak benches.

Was there a pew in the church when first built?

Yes, for the minister's family.

When were the square pews first installed?

1755. (Sold at auction Jan. 6, 1756.)

How many square pews originally?

Two rows all around the church.

When were the remainder of pews put in?

Various times from 1791 to 1817.

Is this the original pulpit?

No. The original pulpit was on the east or cemetery side of the meeting house.

When was this pulpit built?

1755.

Were the original windows the same as the present?

The original windows were probably lattices with diamond panes set in lead.

When were the windows changed?

They were probably changed to rectangular panes set in wooden frames in 1731. The present windows were put in in 1869 with diamond panes, in imitation of the first windows.

When was the first organ installed?

A tradition says that about the time of the Revolution an organ was set up in the meeting house, but that it was eventually sold and taken to Portland, Maine. An organ was installed in 1867. This was sold in 1870 and a new one purchased. The present organ dates from 1902.

What music did they have before they installed the organ?

Various musical instruments were used, but chiefly a flute which was played by one man for 30 years, and a base viol played by one man for 50 years.

Where was this music located?

In the gallery opposite the pulpit.

What is the origin of the oak armchair?

It was made by Harry E. Tofts of Hingham, England, from wood of a tree planted by Queen Elizabeth, and presented by Mr. Tofts to the church in 1923.

Why is the bell rope left hanging in the church?

It was used to ring the bell for fires.

How was the meeting house originally heated?

First heated in 1822 by two stoves.

What is the present heating arrangement?

A steam plant in the parish house on the opposite side of the street.

Is there any fire protection?

A sprinkler system was installed in spring of 1930.

How old is the bell?

Put in belfry in 1822. (First rang for church July 26, 1822.)

Was there a bell before this?

Yes, there was a bell on the first meeting house certainly as early as 1663, and when the new and present one was built, the town voted to get a bell twice as big as the old one. There have been several bells at different times.

Who was the first minister?

Rev. Peter Hobart.

Where is the tomb of the Rev. Peter Hobart?

The tomb bearing the names of Rev. Peter Hobart, Rev. John Norton, and Rev. Ebenezer Gay is on the second avenue in the cemetery back of the meeting house about 80 feet north of and opposite the cemetery gate. The Rev. Peter Hobart was buried first in the cemetery near the original meeting house, and reinterred as above.

How many ministers has this church had?

Twelve.

Which was Gen. Benjamin Lincoln's pew?

Square pew No. 47.

Where was Gen. Benjamin Lincoln buried?

His marble tomb is in the cemetery a short distance back of the meeting house.

When was the Hingham Cemetery established?

The first burials on the land to the east of the meeting house took place probably between 1703 and 1713, when Dr. Hall gave permission to "several persons to bury their relatives" on a corner of his land.

What is the tall granite monument in the cemetery in the rear of Derby Academy?

It was erected in 1831 to the memory of the first settlers. It stands over a vault in which were placed the remains of the bodies taken from the first cemetery when the change in the highway disturbed them. The monument stands in the center of an earthwork first built by the colonists for protection, one of three built in the town.

When was the bell tower built?

1912. Dedicated Nov. 25, 1912.

What does it represent?

A memorial to the early settlers of the town.

Are the Parish Records complete?

The town ran the church from its beginning until 1721 when the second precinct, now Cohasset, was set off, and the church records up to that date are scattered through the town records. Parish records, complete from 1712 to present time, are in custody of clerk of parish.

Hingham's Old Ship Church Has Been Restored

Seventeenth Century Construction — Splendid Open-Timbered Roof

By Edgar T. P. Walker

IN this year of the Tercentenary, there has been no event of greater archaeological interest, or one more fitted to take us back in every way to the early life of our forefathers, than the restoration of the Old Ship Meeting House in Hingham.

In the original church, erected in 1681, we still see the north and south walls with their great solid posts and heavy, hand-hewn horizontal timbers, as well as the interior columns which were the original posts of the east and west walls. Above all of this original work of that early date remains, complete in its original form the open-timbered, trussed roof.

We find great solid wood posts and projecting wood beams, opened beamed ceilings, wide board or battened doors, projecting gables and overhanging second floors with pendant drops, steep roofs, high ornamental brick chimneys, and almost every feature of the Gothic house of the English sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

In other words, all of our Colonial work of the seventeenth century, save for the use of masonry half-timbered work, was clearly the structural design of English Gothic. It was not until after 1700 that there appeared in America the moulded panels in wainscots, classic mantels, cornices, columns and gable trim all moulded in Classic or Renaissance forms.

The old church of 1681 is the outstanding example of this Gothic style carried across the Atlantic after its passing from common use in England, due to the introduction in London of Wren's Renaissance Churches in the latter half of the seventeenth century. To antiquarians, the outstanding feature of English Gothic work in America is the extraordinarily beautiful Gothic roof.

While this roof is unlike any particular roof in England, the design of its features throughout are those of English Gothic building traditions, and we have the great English Gothic Nave suggested by the three great king-post trusses on the one hand, and the typical Early American Meeting House, having a pyramidal roof with truncated deck, shown most completely on the other.

The Hingham roof is composed of three main trusses, each with a tie beam forty-five feet in length, a king post, a pair of principal rafters supported from below by a pair of curved truss rafters on struts. These curved truss rafters, in addition to supporting the principal outer rafters on which rest the entire shell of the roof, are also notched into the king post, and by their inward thrusts hold aloft the king post from which hangs the great forty-five foot tie beam. In its organic quality it is the most beautiful example of Gothic art in America. In its design of timbers, braces, chambered mouldings, textures and colors, it is a joy to the student of antiquity. And in its structural design, expressive purely of the balance of forces, or stresses acting in

different members, it is of extraordinary interest to the engineer.

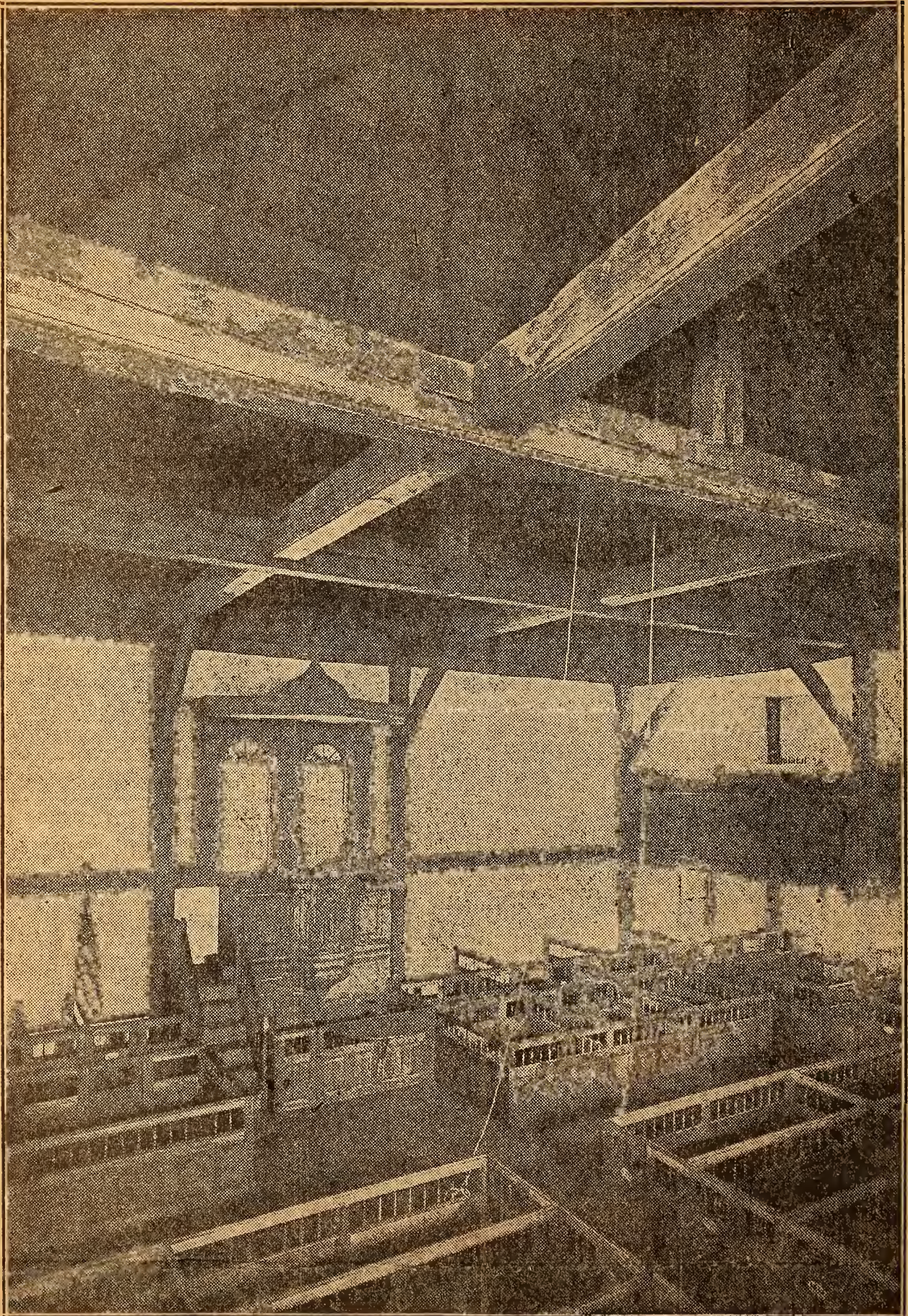
Horizontally, between the outer or principal rafters, extend the solid beams or purlins, into which are mortised the small or common rafters. The rafters, the purlins and the truss rafters are all mortised together so that the roof boards rest directly on all these members. This entire framing, in excellent preservation, takes us back to the seventeenth century, and but a step further, to the English Gothic work of the great church-builders of England.

Our early forefathers instinctively built their meeting houses in terms of wood construction forms as they knew them in England. Yet they aimed to construct houses of worship which in no sense recalled their native churches in England. They constructed simply an assembly house, without chancel, choir or altar. The only features which impressed the spirit of worship were the high pulpits and sometimes a communion leaf of shelf. In line with this thought the meeting house was a plain, rectangular building with the roof sloping in on all four sides, with dormers on each side, terminating at the top in a small flat deck upon which rested a belfry.

The fine old meeting houses at Rockingham, Vt., at Sandown, N. H., and at Amesbury, Mass., are most interesting

examples of eighteenth-century work just before and after the time of the Revolution. They have beautiful pulpits, and box pews with spindles in natural wood. They are comparable to the pulpit and pews in the Old Ship Meeting House in Hingham and were probably influenced by the work there, which was built in the Hingham structure in the year 1755. The restoration of the Old Ship Meeting House in its lower interior is as of the years 1755 to 1800 and is exceedingly interesting and fine, as representing work of that particular time. But the roof is the special feature which makes the Old Ship Church a national monument. It is the perfect example of American Gothic church art, the only extant example of the early seventeenth-century meeting house accurately and fully preserved, to be found in this country.

The Old Ship Meeting House has come back to its own after a period of one hundred and ninety-nine years through the generosity of Mr. Eben Howard Gay of Boston, great-great-grandson of Dr. Ebenezer Gay. The architects in charge of the restoration were Smith and Walker of Boston.



(Courtesy of Smith and Walker, Architects, Boston)

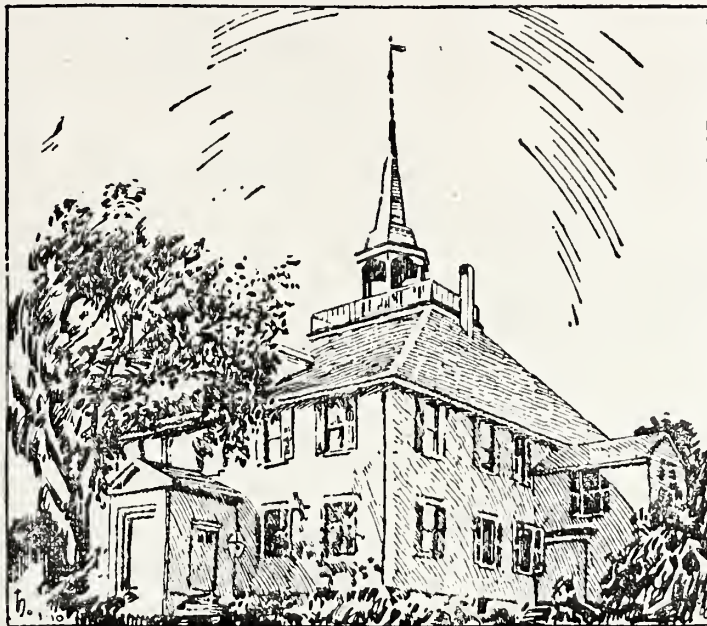
A Stanch Ship Whose Port Is Heaven

BOSTON EVENING TRANSCRIPT, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1930

FAMOUS CHURCHES OF THE WORLD

By E. L. Tinzmann

than providing merely a place for worship. For more than one hundred years it was used also for town meetings and village gatherings.



OLD SHIP CHURCH, HINGHAM, MASS.

Remove the small porch from the west of the old church at Hingham and you'll have it just as it was built in the year 1680. Two-hundred and fifty years have elapsed since it was erected and yet it stands on its original site just as its builders have left it, a quaint structure in the severe style of architecture so popular with the early New England colonists. The peculiar appearance of the church is responsible for the title by which it has been known so long, the Old Ship. Its only ornamentation is the belfry, housing the ancient bell. From this hangs down in the middle of church the bell rope used on every occasion when services are called.

The interior of the edifice is as were all early American churches. There was no heating appliance, no decorations of any sort, and the congregation worshipped under bare rafters and seated on crude benches minus backs. During the many years since the Rev. Peter Hobart preached against the evils of hoop-skirts and the congrega-

tion gathered to discuss means of preventing Indian depredations, there has been virtually no change in the interior of this church except for the addition of stoves and the more comfortable seats which were installed in 1817.

The old records indicate a flare for luxury, though, in 1763, when a meeting of the congregatoin took place to consider the assigning of seats to "persons skilled in musick," and in 1802 a bass viol was purchased to aid in the services. Additions of a flute, violin, bassoon and clarinet followed, gradually paving the way for the introduction of an organ in 1866.

Bishop Meade, in his eulogy of the old church, says there exists nowhere in the limits of the United States a house for public worship as old as the meeting house of the Parish in Hingham, which still continues to be used for the purpose for which it was originally erected. Like many another early New England meeting house, the Old Ship has also done other service





The "Old Ship" Church

HINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

Erected in 1681

*The oldest church structure in continuous
use in America*

WHILE other churches are older, notably those at Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Smithfield, Virginia, the Hingham Meeting House is the only one of that age to have been used without long periods of vacancy, or to have escaped the practical ruin of its building. The Hingham congregation has worshipped regularly in the same Meeting House for nearly two hundred and sixty years, a length of time not equalled elsewhere in the country.

The "Old Ship" Church is the second Meeting House built by the First Parish in Hingham. Timbers from the first were used in its construction. The Parish was settled in 1635 by the Rev. Peter Hobart, founder of the Town.

THE "OLD SHIP" CHURCH

The church probably gets its name from the peculiar nature of its roof structure which, if inverted, would show some resemblance to the hull of a ship.

Timbers for the building were cut from nearby trees by members of the Parish. Marks of the broad-ax may still be seen. Indians still roamed this part of the country, and they were allotted certain seats in the Meeting House.

The curved roof-timbering is of unique design and is remarkably correct architecturally. It is reproduced in the roof of the Colonial Room of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The curved timbers of the Meeting House roof form the third longest wooden arch in the world.

The frame and walls of the building stand as built in 1681, except for the addition of the side galleries in 1730 and 1755. The ceiling, erected in 1731, was removed when the building was restored in 1930.

Rude wooden benches were originally used by the worshippers. In 1755, the present high pulpit and the first box pews were built. In 1869, these were replaced by curving pews. In 1930, box pews were restored. Parts of original pews were built into the present pews, and thirty-one of the eighty original pew doors have been hung in their original location.

General Benjamin Lincoln, who received the sword from Lord Cornwallis at his surrender at Yorktown, attended the Meeting House for most of his long life. The location of his pew is marked by a tablet.

Samuel Lincoln, original American ancestor of Abraham Lincoln, who came to Hingham in 1637, also worshipped in the Meeting House for many years. A tablet marks the location of his seat.

Dr. Ebenezer Gay, third minister of the Parish, is known as the first American Unitarian. Dr. Henry Ware, fourth minister, was called from the Hingham pulpit to become Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard College, thus bringing to a head the Unitarian controversy.

Three parishes have separated from the old Hingham church. The Cohasset Meeting House was probably erected in 1713. That at South Hingham was built in 1742. The New North Church was built in 1807.

During a history of over three hundred years, the First Parish in Hingham has been served by but twelve ministers.





THE OLD MEETING HOUSE, WIDELY KNOWN AS THE "OLD SHIP CHURCH," HINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS,
BUILT IN 1681 AND THE BELL TOWER BUILT IN 1912 AS A MEMORIAL TO THE
FOUNDERS OF THE HINGHAM PLANTATION

The
“Old Ship Church”
in
Hingham
Massachusetts



Erected in 1681

The Oldest Church Structure in Continuous
Use in the United States

The Old Meeting House

The Old Meeting House in Hingham is the oldest building in the United States that has been used continuously for public worship. It was built in 1681.

In the year 1635 a group of people, under the leadership of Peter Hobart, a young minister from Norfolk, England, sailed down the bay, probably from Charlestown, and rounding the slight hill at the southerly end of the harbor landed near what is today the junction of North and Ship streets. Here they held a service of worship. A tablet now marks the spot.

Shortly after the parish had been "gathered," the first Meeting House was built. It stood on a low hill, near the present site of Derby Academy, and was guarded by a palisade from possible Indian attacks. For nearly half a century it served as the place not only for religious services, but for all civic gatherings. Then a larger building was needed, and after much discussion its location was chosen. On July 8, 1681, the site of the present Meeting House was deeded to the town. Six months from that date the building was opened for public worship. Parts of the old house were used in the construction of the new. Today the struct-

ure is apparently as strong as when its timbers were fresh from the broad-ax, the marks of which are still to be seen along its walls.

The original seats were plain benches without backs. The pulpit stood on the side next the cemetery. Before the year 1731 there was no ceiling, and all was open to the rafters. The name often given to the building, The Old Ship, probably came from the resemblance of the roof timbers to the frame of a vessel.

The present pulpit was erected in 1755, and two rows of square pews were built all around the walls, leaving the space in the center of the house for long oak seats. Here the men took their places on one side of the broad aisle, and the women on the other. Later this whole space was covered by pews. In 1869, when it became necessary to replace the floor timbers, modern seats were installed.

In the year 1930 these pews were removed and reproductions of the 1755 pews were placed in the body of the Meeting House.

Thirty-two of the original doors have been placed on the restored pews.

As late as the year 1822 there was no heating apparatus of any kind except tiny, portable footstoves, a few of which are still shown in the square pews preserved in the northwestern corner of the Meeting House. When one considers that the sermons were sometimes two hours long, and that there were two services on each Sunday, the fortitude of our forefathers calls for admiration.

On the walls of the Meeting House are tablets which will interest the visitor. Here, too,

are "Saint Peter's Keys," a carved *bas relief* dating back to the year 1316. It was sent to New Hingham from Old Hingham, as a relic of the days when Henry the Eighth ravaged the monasteries of England, and despoiled them of their possessions. Two chairs on the platform are also of historic significance, one having belonged to Thomas Lincoln, who was among the first settlers, and the other having been made from an oak planted by Queen Elizabeth.

Those who examine two brass tablets on the southern wall of the Meeting House will see that for a period of three hundred and three years there were only twelve ministers. The word "teacher" may be unfamiliar in this connection, but Hingham was not the only church that lightened the work of its minister by giving him an assistant thus designated.

In these days of change it is good to think that for two hundred and fifty-eight years the Old Meeting House has "stood foursquare to all the winds that blew."

The hour-glass on pulpit, 1718.

The "Old Bible" on pulpit, 1731.

The Present Church

CHURCH BUILDINGS

The Meeting House is situated on the easterly side of Main Street, about one hundred yards south of the railroad station. Across the street is the Parish House, with its assembly hall and social rooms.

CHURCH SERVICE

The regular Church Service is held on Sunday mornings at 10.50. At the close of each service ushers will be glad to conduct visitors over the Meeting House. While the church is Unitarian in its affiliation, many people of other denominations are to be found in its congregation and membership.

CHURCH COVENANT

In welcoming persons to membership in its ranks the Church makes no requirement of Belief, but only assent to a Purpose. The Covenant which new members sign reads as follows: "In the love of Truth and in the spirit of Jesus, we unite for the worship of God and the service of Man."

CHURCH SCHOOL

The Church School holds its sessions in the Parish House on each Sunday morning from October to May, inclusive. The School is thoroughly organized, with teachers and classes for all ages. A Kindergarten, for very young children and those whose parents wish to attend Church, meets under the direction of a trained kindergartner.

PETER HOBART CLUB

This club, for young people of High School age and over, meets in the Parish House on Sunday morning. Under the guidance of two ex-

perienced adult leaders the group conducts its own discussions and engages in other activities. Occasional social gatherings are held.

LADIES' BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

This Society holds an afternoon meeting and an all-day meeting with luncheon each month. Besides helpful work for the Church, it engages in philanthropic activities.

WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

Composed of women of the three Unitarian churches of Hingham, this organization meets in the Parish House one afternoon a month. One or more speakers address the gathering, and tea is served.

LEND-A-HAND CLUB

This group, made up of women of the Parish, engages in many worthy causes during the year. Once each month it holds an all-day meeting with luncheon and an afternoon or evening meeting.

PARISH SUPPER

During the church year a Monthly Parish Supper and Entertainment is held. These gatherings are very generally attended by members of the Parish and offer a favorable opportunity for newcomers to become more widely acquainted. All those who are considering making this their church home are invited to come.

CHURCH CALENDAR

A Church Calendar, listing the activities of the month is mailed regularly to the families of the Parish. Copies of the Calendar may be found in the vestibule of the Church. The Calendar is free. If you care to have it mailed to you each month, give your address to the Minister or to an usher.